

**EASTERN KENTUCKY TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRESS:**

**PART II**

**BY**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to do a survey of randomly selected Eastern Kentucky teachers (Elementary, Middle, and High School) to collect data about stress in public schools. The stress data collected from this survey was compared to the stress data collected from a 2010 survey of Eastern Kentucky Principals. This was a continuation study for Eastern Kentucky that collected data on how men and women teachers and men and women administrators handle stress. This study sought to determine if there are differences in how men and women teachers/administrators handle stress at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In addition, the research considered school size, school financial condition, and age as factors that may influence stress for teachers and administrators. The surveys were mailed to randomly selected Eastern Kentucky Principals that are located in the Morehead State University service area (22 Counties) in the spring of 2011.

## **Objectives**

To add to the knowledge concerning stress for Eastern Kentucky teachers and administrators;  
To share the findings with the Commonwealth, universities, school districts, administrators, teachers, and the public;  
To add to the research that is available regarding the public schools served by Morehead State University.

## **Literature Review**

Mersky (1983) completed a study involving stress for educators in Eastern Kentucky.

Mersky conducted a study concerning task-based stress among teachers in a rural setting.

Teachers in 12 Eastern Kentucky schools were asked to complete a 51-item instrument. Mersky found that stress in Eastern Kentucky for teachers is associated with management practices.

Also, stress for teachers was the result of violence/student discipline. Mersky found the least stressful events for teachers centered on pedagogical activities. Mersky suggests the need for improved management practices in Eastern Kentucky schools.

Kirby (1990) studied the stress levels of Kentucky elementary school principals. Kirby surveyed 200 Kentucky elementary school principals using a 24 item survey. Kirby's findings indicated forcing the resignation/dismissal of a teacher and dealing with unsatisfactory professional performance were the two most stressful events for elementary school principals. The lowest amount of stress was found to be working with the district's central administration. Kirby concluded the job of being a Kentucky elementary school principal is not highly stressful.

Hammond and Onikama (1997) found stress factors for teachers were caused by school reform efforts, minimal administrative support, poor working circumstances, and lack of involvement in school decision making, paperwork, and lack of resources. Moody and Barrett (2009) concluded that administrators cause stress for teachers, administrators know their teachers are stressed, teaching is stressful and teachers are aware of their stress, and stress affects students.

Hammond and Onikama concluded there is a difference in stress between administrators and teachers. They stated that administrators are making healthier choices than teachers.

Haberman (2004), in a very good article on teacher burnout, stated “The persistent and pervasive nature of teacher stress studies makes it clear that teaching has become a high stress occupation”. Haberman noted that teacher stress and turnover now costs 2.6 billion dollars annually to school districts.

Wright and Ballesteros (2011) reached the following conclusions about stress: A majority of the principals (63%) indicated men teachers handle stress the best. A majority of the principals (68%) indicated men school administrators handle stress the best. The principals felt enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers and school administrators. A majority of Principals felt financial conditions makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers and school administrators. Another factor that was identified as contributing to stress for teachers and school administrators was the age of teachers and administrators. And the Principals unanimously indicated that stress was increasing for teachers and school administrators.

## **Methods/Research Design**

A stress survey was sent to randomly selected elementary, middle, and high school teachers located in the Eastern Kentucky region serviced by Morehead State University (22 Counties) (See Attachment D). The region serviced by Morehead State University consists of 158 elementary schools, 33 middle schools, and 48 high schools. The teachers were selected by a random drawing. For the 10% random sampling, 16 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 5 high schools were randomly selected for the survey. . The first survey was mailed on April 28, 2011 and was to be returned by May 24, 2010. The first mailing resulted in 16 surveys being returned out of the 25 that were sent. A follow-up survey was mailed on May 22, 2011. The follow-up survey was to be returned by June 7, 2011. The follow-up survey resulted in 3 additional useable surveys being returned for a total of 19 returned surveys. This provided a 76% return percent for the survey. A copy of the survey and the informational letters are included as Appendix A, B, and C respectively. The surveys were returned to the Foundational and Graduate Studies in Education office for tabulation. The survey (Attachment A) was developed, mailed, and analyzed by Dr. Sam Wright and Dr. Victor Ballesteros.

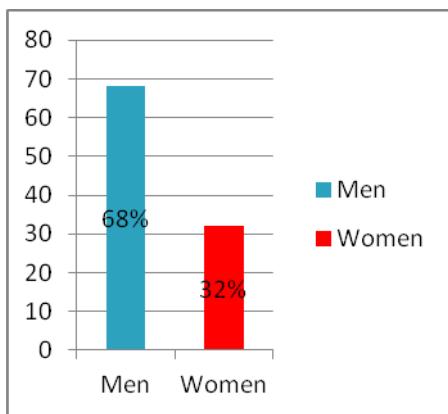
This is a continuation study on teacher and administrative stress for Eastern Kentucky. The data for the 2010 study was collected from Eastern Kentucky Principals. The data for the 2011 study was collected from Eastern Kentucky Teachers. The survey questions were identical for both surveys.

## Survey Results

### Question 1. Which gender of teachers handle stress the best?

There were 6 teachers (32%) who indicated they believed women teachers handle stress the best. For the second option, 13 teachers (68%) selected men teachers as handling stress the best.

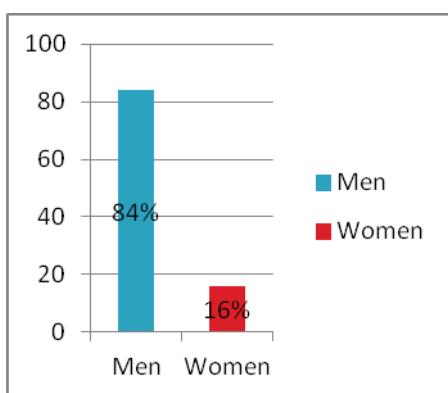
**Men Teachers Handle Stress the Best**



### Question 2. Which gender of school administrators handle stress the best?

There were 3 teachers (16%) who marked they believed women administrators handle stress the best. For the male option, 16 teachers (84%) selected men administrators as being the best at handling stress.

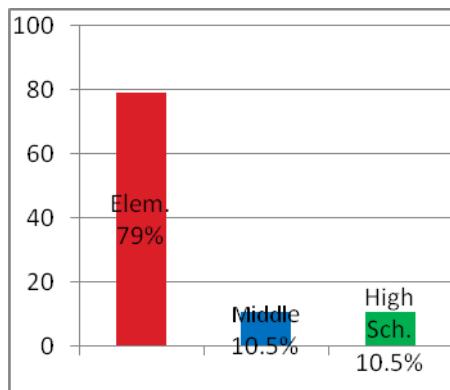
**Men Administrators Handle Stress the Best**



**Question 3.** Which grade level of teachers handle stress the best?

There were 15 teachers (79%) who selected elementary teachers as being the best at handling stress. There were 2 teachers (10.5%) who selected middle school teachers as being the best at handling stress. And 2 teachers (10.5%) selected high school teachers as being the best at handling stress.

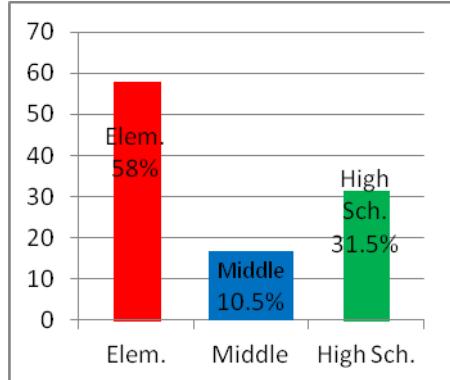
**Elementary Teachers Handle Stress the Best**



**Question 4.** Which grade level of school administrators handle stress the best?

There were 11 teachers (58%) who selected elementary administrators as being the best at handling stress. Only 2 teachers (10.5%) selected middle school administrators as being the best at handling stress. And 6 teachers (31.5%) selected high school administrators as being the best stress handlers.

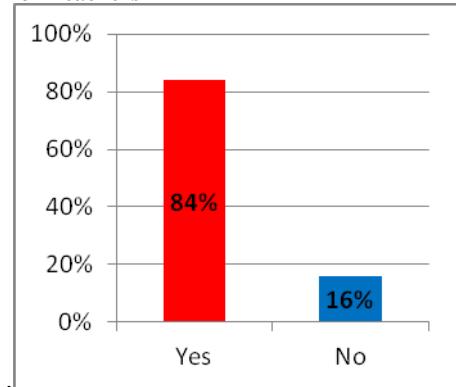
**Elementary Administrators Handle Stress the Best**



**Question 5.** Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?

There were 16 teachers (84%) that marked yes school enrollment makes a difference. Only 3 teachers (16%) marked that enrollment made no difference in the level of stress for teachers.

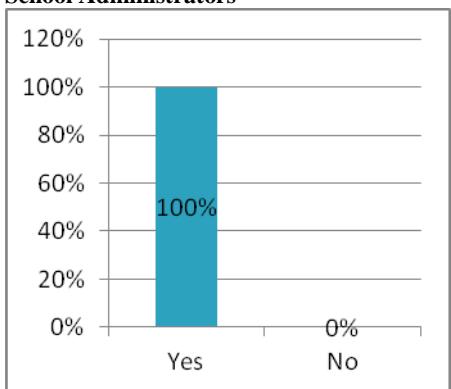
**Enrollment Makes a Difference in Stress for Teachers**



**Question 6.** Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?

All of the teachers (100%) indicated they felt enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.

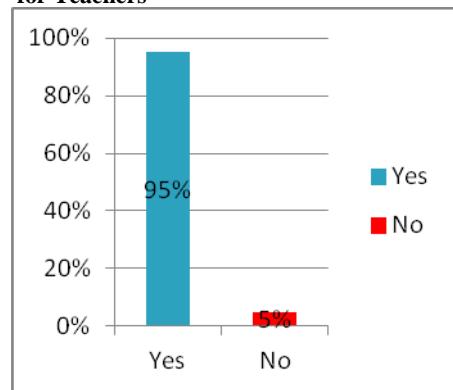
**Enrollment Makes a Difference in Stress for School Administrators**



**Question 7.** Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?

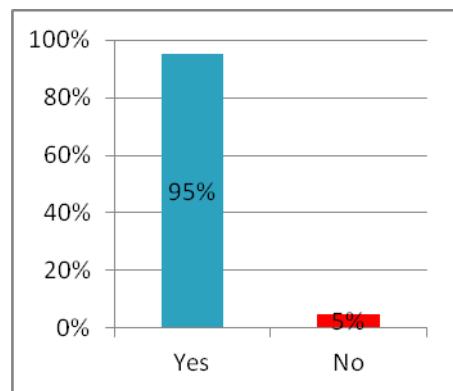
There were 18 teachers (95%) that selected yes indicating that the financial condition of a school district does make a difference in the level of stress for teachers. Only 1 teacher (5%) indicated they do not feel the financial condition of a school district makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.

**Financial Condition Makes a Difference for Teachers**



**Question 8.** Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?

There were 18 teachers (95%) that selected yes that the financial condition of a school district does make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators. Only 1 teacher (5%) indicated they do not feel the financial condition of a school district makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.

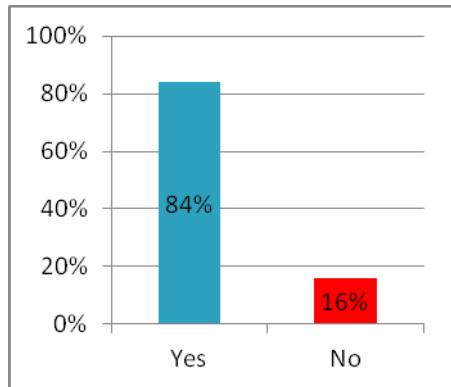


**Financial Condition Makes a Difference for Administrators**

**Question 9.** Does the age of a teacher make a difference in the level of stress?

There were 16 teachers (84%) that indicated yes the age of a teacher makes a difference in the level of stress. There were 3 teachers (16%) that indicated age was no factor in the level of stress for teachers.

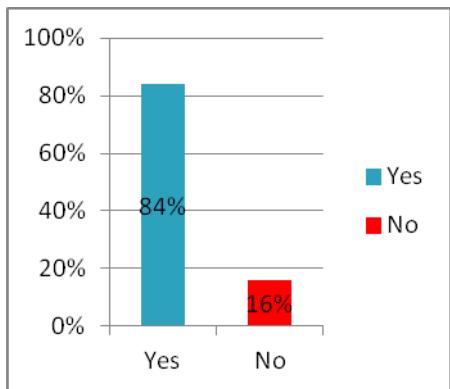
**Teacher Age Makes a Difference**



**Question 10.** Does the age of a school administrator make a difference in the level of stress?

There were 16 teachers (84%) that indicated yes the age of a school administrator makes a difference in the level of stress. There were 3 teachers (16%) that indicated age was no factor in the level of stress of school administrators.

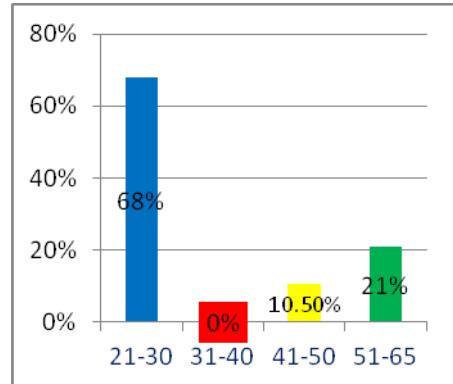
**Age Makes a Difference for Administrators**



**Question 11.** Which age group of teachers suffers the highest level of stress?

There were 13 teachers (68%) who selected the 21-30 age group of teachers as suffering the highest level of stress. No teachers selected the 31-40 age group. The 41-50 age group was selected by 2 teachers (10.5%). The 51-65 age group was selected by 4 teachers (21%).

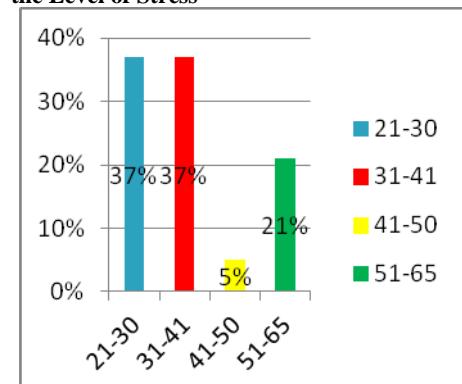
**21-30 Age Group of Teachers Suffer the Most Stress**



**Question 12.** Which age group of school administrators suffers the highest level of stress?

There were 7 teachers (37%) who selected the 21-30 age group of school administrators as suffering the highest level of stress. The 31-40 age group was also selected by 7 teachers (37%). The 41-50 age group was selected by 1 teacher (5%). The 51-65 age group was selected by 4 teachers (21%).

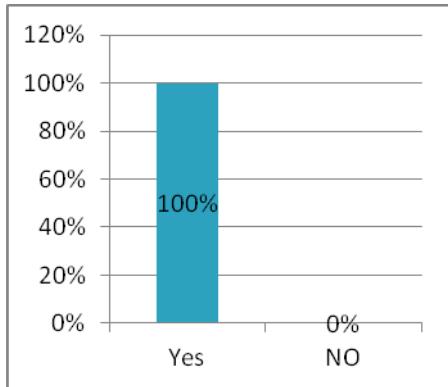
**Two Administrative Age Groups Tie for the Level of Stress**



**Question 13.** Is teacher stress increasing or decreasing?

All 19 teachers (100%) indicated they felt teacher stress was increasing.

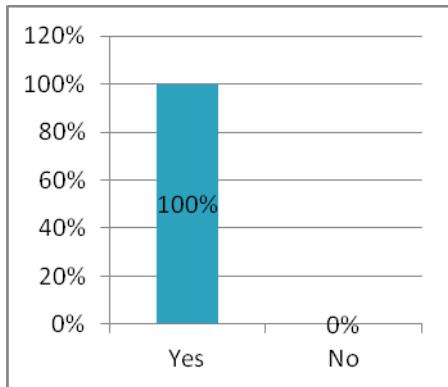
**Teacher Stress is Increasing Unanimously**



**Question 14.** Is school administrator stress increasing or decreasing?

All 19 teachers (100%) indicated they felt school administrator stress was increasing.

**Administrator Stress is Increasing Unanimously**



## **Conclusions:**

1. A majority of the teachers (68%) indicated men teachers handle stress the best.
2. A clear majority of the teachers (84%) indicated men school administrators handle stress the best.
3. A majority of teachers (79%) indicated elementary teachers handle stress the best.
4. A majority of teachers (58%) indicated that elementary school administrators handle stress the best.
5. A majority of teachers (84%) felt enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.
6. The teachers felt unanimously that enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.
7. A majority of the teachers (95%) felt the financial condition of a school district makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.
8. A majority of the teachers (95%) felt the financial condition of a school district makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.
9. A majority of the teachers (84%) felt age makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.
10. A majority of the teachers (84%) felt age makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.
11. The teachers (68%) felt the 21-30 age group of teachers suffered the highest level of stress.
12. The teachers (37% and 37%) felt school administrators in the 21-30 and 31-40 age groups suffered the highest level of stress. It was a tie.
13. The teachers unanimously indicated stress was increasing for teachers.
14. The teachers unanimously indicated stress was increasing for school administrators.

## **Implications:**

1. The results of the survey indicated that men teachers and men school administrators handle stress better than their women counterparts. This should be taken into consideration by School Boards and Superintendents. Strategies should be implemented to reduce the level of stress for women who become teachers and school administrators.
2. Strategies should also be implemented to reduce the stress of middle and high school teachers and school administrators. The results of the survey indicated middle and high school teachers and school administrators suffer more stress than their elementary counterparts.
3. It is clear that enrollment results in stress for teachers and school administrators. This is another very good reason for School Boards and Superintendents to strive to keep enrollments small. Evidently, larger classes and large school enrollments make a difference in the level of stress for both teachers and school administrators.
4. Financial conditions make a difference in the level of stress for both teachers and school administrators. The only way to solve this ongoing national problem is for elected officials to make school funding a high priority legislative item. The Gallup/PDK Yearly Poll has the American public identifying school funding as their number one problem for the past decade. It is clear that public officials have not solved the school funding issue.
5. A clear majority (84%) of teachers felt age makes a difference in the level of stress for both teachers and school administrators. The 21-30 age group of teachers and the 21-30 and 31-40 age group of school administrators were identified as suffering the most stress. Strategies need to be implemented by School Boards and Superintendents to reduce stress for these groups of teachers and school administrators.
6. The survey results indicated unanimously that stress is increasing for both teachers and school administrators. Stress is one of the most harmful factors on human beings and their health. The data indicates an increase of stress for teachers and school administrators in Eastern Kentucky school districts. Stress is harmful to our teachers and school administrators and makes Kentucky schools less of a positive learning environment for children.
7. The responsibility of reducing stress is ultimately a state task. The Kentucky legal case of *Rose v. Council for Better Education* (1989) ruled the obligation of common schools is a state responsibility and it cannot be shifted to local school districts. The Commonwealth of Kentucky bears the burden of reducing stress for all Kentucky teachers and school administrators.

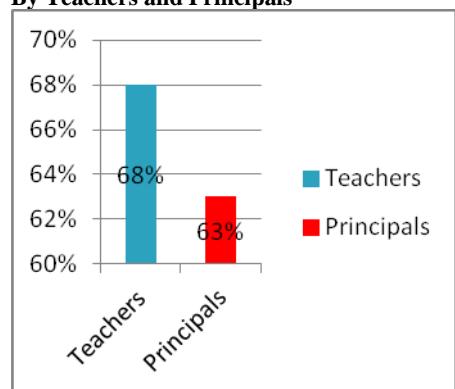
## Comparison of 2010 Principal Data to 2011 Teacher Data

This section will analyze the data collected from 2010 Principal surveys to the data collected from this 2011 Teacher survey. This is the second of a three part study of stress for teachers and school administrators in Eastern Kentucky.

**Question 1.** Which gender of teachers handle stress the best?

Both the teachers and principals indicated that men teachers handle stress the best. Teachers gave men teachers a 68% rate as being better than women teachers to handle stress. Principals gave the advantage at 63% to men teachers in 2010.

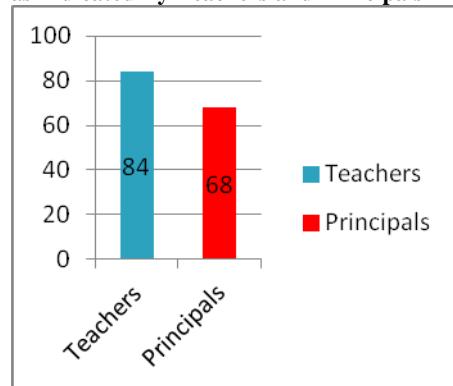
**Men Teachers Handle Stress the Best As Indicated  
By Teachers and Principals**



**Question 2.** Which gender of school administrators handle stress the best?

Both the teachers and principals indicated that men school administrators handle stress the best. Teachers gave men school administrators an 84% rate as being better than women school administrators to handle stress. Principals gave the advantage at 68% to men school administrators in 2010.

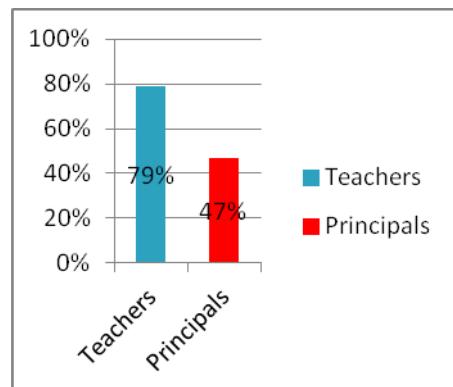
**Men School Administrators Handle Stress the Best as Indicated By Teachers and Principals**



**Question 3.** Which grade level of teachers handle stress the best?

Both the teachers and school administrators indicated that elementary teachers handle stress the best. The teachers indicated elementary teachers at 79% while the principals had a 47% slight edge to elementary teachers. The difference may be that principals tend to support their teachers at each level of school organization (elementary, middle, or high school).

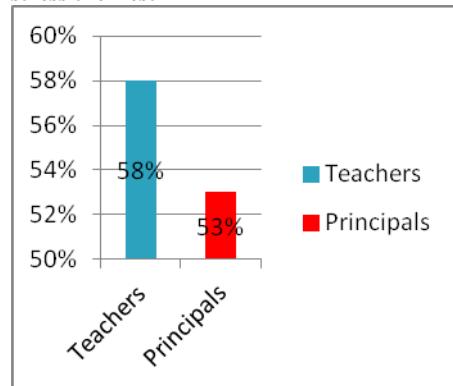
**Elementary Teachers Handle Stress the Best**



**Question 4.** Which grade level of school administrators handle stress the best?

Both the teachers and principals indicated that elementary school administrators handle stress the best. A majority of the teachers (58%) indicated that elementary school administrators handle stress the best. A majority of the principals (53%) selected elementary school administrators.

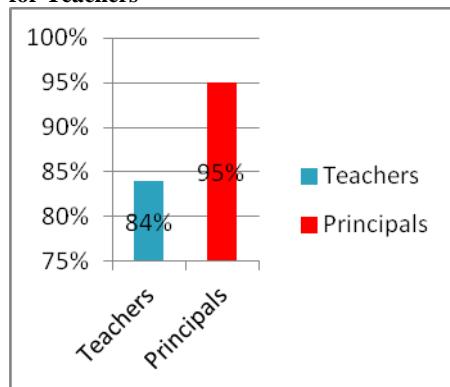
**Elementary School Administrators Handle  
stress the Best**



**Question 5.** Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?

Both teachers and principals indicated that enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers. A majority of teachers (84%) felt enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers. A greater percentage of principals (95%) felt enrollment makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.

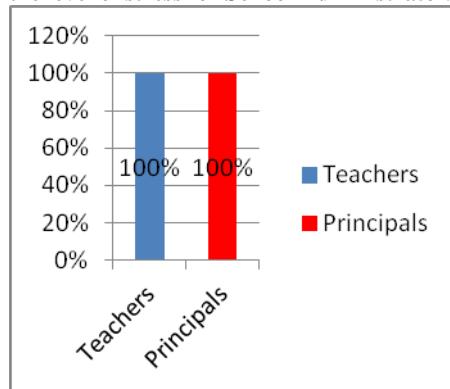
**Enrollment Makes a Difference in Stress for Teachers**



**Question 6.** Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?

Both the teachers and principals unanimously (100%) said yes.

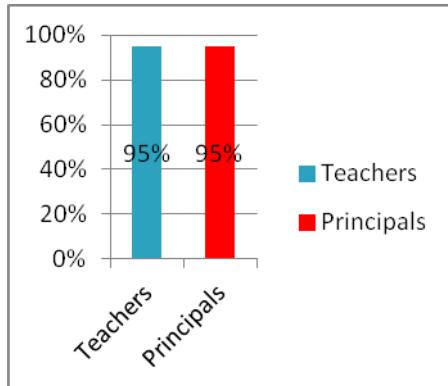
**Teachers and Administrators Unanimously feel the Enrollment of a School can Increase the level of stress for School Administrators**



**Question 7.** Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?

Both teachers (95%) and principals (95%) indicated the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for teachers. This connects with the Phi Delta Kappan polls for the past ten years that identify school funding as the number one issue according to the American public.

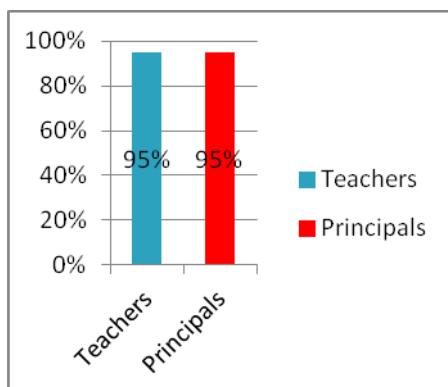
**Teachers and School Administrators Feel the Financial Condition of a School District result in Stress for Teachers**



**Question 8.** Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?

Both teachers (95%) and principals (95%) indicated the financial condition of a school district makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators. This again connects with the Phi Delta Kappan polls for the past ten years that identify school funding as the number one issue according to the American public. Both teachers and school administrators are being affected by the financial conditions in school districts.

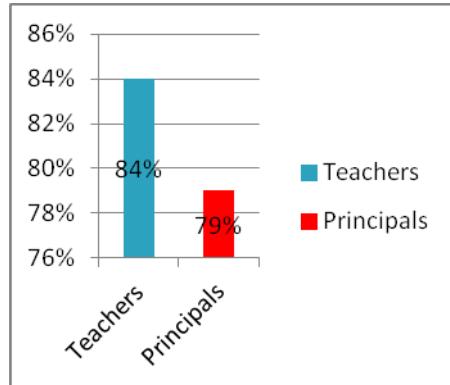
**Teachers and School Administrators Feel the Financial Condition of a School District result in Stress for School Administrators**



**Question 9.** Does the age of a teacher make a difference in the level of stress?

A majority of teachers (84%) and principals (79%) indicated they felt age makes a difference in the level of stress for teachers.

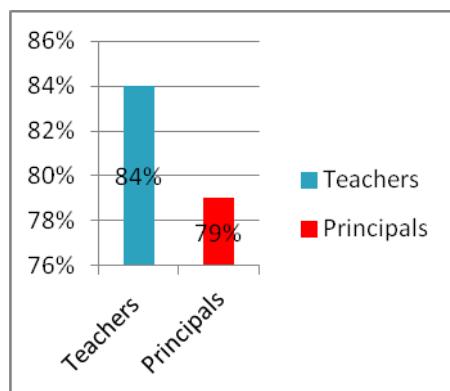
**Teachers and Principals feel Age Makes a difference in Stress for Teachers**



**Question 10.** Does the age of a school administrator make a difference in the level of stress?

A majority of teachers (84%) and principals (79%) indicated they felt age makes a difference in the level of stress for school administrators.

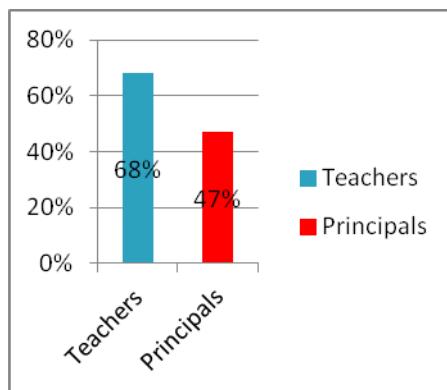
**Teachers and Principals feel Age Makes a difference in Stress for School Administrators**



**Question 11.** Which age group of teachers suffers the highest level of stress?

The teachers (68%) felt the 21-30 age group of teachers suffered the highest level of stress. The principals felt the 21-30 age group of teachers (47%) suffered the highest level of stress. More teachers saw stress in this group than the principals; although both agreed this was the age group with the most stress.

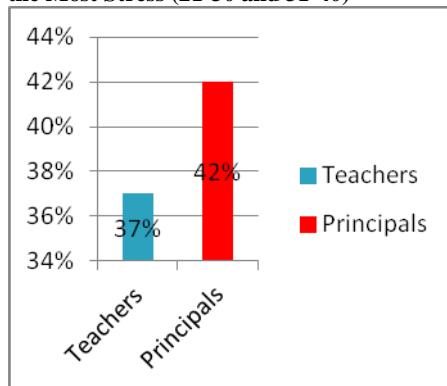
**Teachers 21-30 Suffer the Most Stress**



**Question 12.** Which age group of school administrators suffers the highest level of stress?

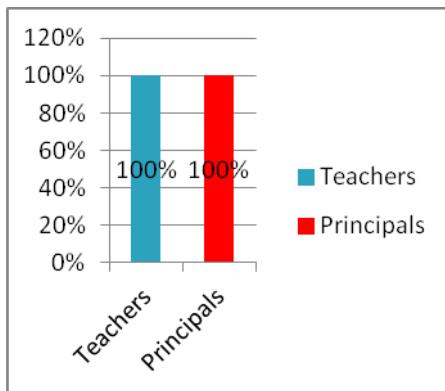
It was a tie for teachers. The teachers felt school administrators (37% and 37%) in the 21-30 and 31-40 age groups suffered the highest level of stress. The principals indicated the 31-40 age group of school administrators (42%) suffered the highest level of stress.

**Two Groups of School Administrators Suffer the Most Stress (21-30 and 31-40)**



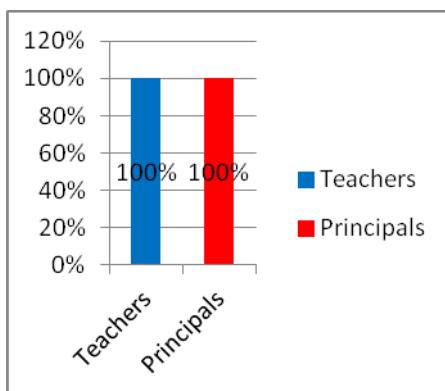
**Question 13.** Is Teacher stress increasing or decreasing?

Teachers and principals unanimously indicated stress was increasing for teachers.



**Question 14.** Is school administrator stress increasing or decreasing?

Teachers and principals unanimously indicated stress was increasing for school administrators.



## References

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Mersky, Ronald (1983). Management Practices: A Major Cause of Stress among Teachers. Retrieved October 27, 2009 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?\\_nf...](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nf...)

Wright, Sam & Ballesteros, Victor (2011). Eastern Kentucky Teacher And Administrative Stress, Morehead State University. (ERIC Document No. ED 518 480).

**Appendix A:**

**Eastern Kentucky Teacher and Administrative Stress Survey**

**Directions: Please answer the questions by placing a check mark in the space that answers the question. The response will be your opinion.**

**1. Which gender of teachers handle stress the best?**

**Women Teachers**

**Men Teachers**

**2. Which gender of school administrators handle stress the best?**

**Women Administrators**

**Men Administrators**

**3. Which grade level of teachers handle stress the best?**

**Elementary Teachers**

**Middle School Teachers**

**High School Teachers**

**4. Which grade level of school administrators handle stress the best?**

**Elementary Administrators**

**Middle School Administrators**

**High School Administrators**

**5. Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?**

Yes

No

**6. Does the enrollment of a school make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?**

Yes

No

**7. Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for teachers?**

Yes

No

**8. Does the financial condition of a school district make a difference in the level of stress for school administrators?**

Yes

No

**9. Does the age of a teacher make a difference in the level of stress?**

Yes

No

**10. Does the age of a school administrator make a difference in the level of stress?**

Yes

No

**11. Which age group of teachers suffers the highest level of stress?**

**21-30**

**31-40**

**41-50**

**51-65**

**12. Which age group of school administrators suffers the highest level of stress?**

**21-30**

**31-40**

**41-50**

**51-65**

**13. Is teacher stress increasing or decreasing?**

**Increasing**

**Decreasing**

**14. Is school administrator stress increasing or decreasing?**

**Increasing**

**Decreasing**

**Thank you for your assistance! Please place the survey in the enclosed, stamped envelope and return to Dr. Sam Wright, Associate Professor of Leadership, Morehead State University.**

## **Attachment B**

April 8, 2011

Dear Principal:

The enclosed survey has been designed to collect information about stress concerning Eastern Kentucky teachers and school administrators. You were randomly selected from all the schools served by Morehead State University to participate in this study. In addition, a random drawing was also made for grade level and male and female teacher. As the school Principal and leader, we ask you to pass this survey to the randomly selected teacher at your school. Please ask your colleague to give us a few minutes of their valuable time to complete the short survey regarding stress for teachers and school administrators. A self-addressed, stamped envelope has been enclosed for their convenience in returning the survey.

For your school, please ask a \_\_\_\_\_ to complete and return the survey. The 14 questions can be completed in a few minutes by the teacher who does the survey.

Please assist Dr. Ballester and myself by returning your survey by April 30. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sam Wright  
Associate Professor  
Leadership

Dr. Victor Ballester  
Professor  
Leadership

## **Attachment C**

May 22, 2011

Dear Principal:

The enclosed survey is a follow-up to the one sent to you a few weeks ago. If you have not returned the survey to date, please take a few minutes to complete the questions. The information gathered from the survey will be shared with Kentucky schools. Your valuable help is greatly appreciated. This survey is intended to gather information about stress from Kentucky teachers. Once tabulated, this research will add to the information available concerning stress for teachers and school administrators in Eastern Kentucky.

A self-addressed, stamped envelope has been enclosed for your convenience in returning the survey. Please assist us by returning your survey by June 7<sup>th</sup>. Thank you in advance for your valuable assistance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sam Wright  
Associate Professor  
Leadership

Dr. Victor Ballesteros  
Professor  
Leadership

## Attachment D

